

Legal businesswoman; mother of three; born in Puerto Rico; received B.S. degree in business administration/social studies from University of Puerto Rico; received Juris Doctor degree from Inter-American University; founder of National Association of Law Students in Puerto Rico, which provided free legal services to the community; associate director of Inter-American Law Service.

Resided in Newark in 1985; former matrimonial case coordinator for Essex County courts; former law clerk to Judge Jane Samuels; member of Hispanic-American Chamber of Commerce of Essex County and Puerto Rican Statewide Parade; member of the Newark Commission on Women and Board of Trustees of United Hospital; Central Ward Supervisor.

"The Newark School system stands at a crossroad as we approach the 21st century. Our schools are plagued with high drop-out rates, inadequate facilities, overcrowding, violence, low morale, and inefficiency. As we struggle to ensure equity in funding through the Quality Education Act, as board members we must carefully monitor funding to insure that the majority of OEA funds are channeled into the schools for the development of quality instruction. The greatest challenge for a board member will be to ensure that resources lead to positive educational results as an outcome of working partnerships with all segments of the community. Our schools must produce our students for the challenges of the 21st century.

"If elected to the Newark Board of Education, I would seek to urgently address the high drop-out rate and extensive absenteeism in many of our schools. This must begin with the Newark Board of Education taking an honest appraisal of a problem that has reached crisis proportions. As a board member, I would seek the coordination of comprehensive services that address both prevention and intervention. I will advocate programs such as the Family Net program initiated by the Office of Urban Education that seek to assist schools in coordinating community services to provide help to students and families. Such programs can go hand in hand with activities and supporting programs geared to building high levels of self-esteem among our student body.

"The Newark Board of Education must make reducing the violence in our schools a top priority. As a community person, I know the value of a safe environment in the development of students. I would seek to work closely with those sectors that are attempting to make Newark safer and drug-free. Programs that teach students conflict resolution should be implemented, as well as partnerships between the criminal justice system, parents, students, teachers and community aimed at preventing should be established. Furthermore

security and facilities must be upgraded to insure safe schools.

"As a board member, I should seek the support of my colleagues and administration to move the district toward school-based management. Change and restructuring must be the order of the day if our schools are going to end the spiral of failure.

"More specifically, I would advocate for district-wide districts where the community can play a more intricate role in their neighborhood schools. I would seek to establish programs in these districts that provide leadership development and community service opportunities for our students beginning at the elementary schools.

"In addition, a major issue that confronts the district is to insure that its diverse student population graduates with marketable skills, self-esteem, English proficiency and critical thinking abilities. The district can no longer teach solely for the passing of state tests. Priority must be given to promoting a multi-cultural curriculum, strengthening the effectiveness of our bilingual program, and implementing career/college programs not just for the chosen few, but for all of our children.

"In restructuring, our teachers must be supported by providing incentives for continuing education, as well as programs for training and professional development to insure that they can meet the challenges of a rapidly changing student population and society.

"The increase in teenage pregnancy warrants that the Board of Education expand its efforts to create more day care centers to allow young women to complete their education and acquire marketable skills. Partnerships with local businesses and colleges can be developed to provide alternatives for young mothers to pursue careers.

"Finally, I am convinced that the Sweet school district can be a model for successful urban education and for managing diversity if it provides a truly inclusive environment and allows the community to have ownership in its plan of action. To that end, I will be an advocate for change at the Sweet Board of Education."